DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 276 782 UD 025 214

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TITLE Early School Leavers: High School Students Who Left School before Graduating, 1983-1984. Publication No. 459.
INSTITUTION Los Angeles Unified School District, Calif. Research and Evaluation Branch.
PUB DATE Feb 86
NOTE 27p.; For the 1979-80 and 1981-82 reports, see ED 218 385 and ED 274 764.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; *Dropout Characteristics; *Dropout Programs; Dropout Research; *Dropouts; High Schools; *High School Students; Special Schools
IDENTIFIERS Los Angeles Unified School District LA

ABSTRACT

The Los Angeles Unified School District has funded several innovative prevention/recovery programs to determine indicators that will help local schools identify the potential early leaver. This annual study for the 1983-84 school year examines the number of students in grades 10 through 12 who left school without a diploma. Findings cover all regular senior high schools, opportunity schools, and magnet school programs. Comparison data provided are based on the following: (1) sex, (2) grade, (3) age, (4) ethnicity, and (5) reason for leaving. Significant facts include the following: (1) the 10,555 early leavers represent a slight increase from previous years; (2) more than 60 percent of leavers left during the second semester; (3) most early leavers are male; (4) continuation high schools had the largest percentage of leavers; (5) magnet schools had the fewest leavers of all non-special-education programs; (6) the percentage of early leavers (8.1 percent) was the highest since the district began its studies; (7) "whereabouts unknown" and "overage" represent over 60 percent of early leavers; and (8) the number of early leavers at grade 10 is higher than grades 11 and 12. It is recommended that the district should train teachers and counselors to identify potential early school leavers and provide them with counseling services. Early prevention programs to help students before the 10th grade, presention programs to help students before the 10th grade, and efforts to find students shortly after they leave school to encourage them back into an educational program are also suggested. Nine data tables are appended. (LHW)

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EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS:
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO LEFT SCHOOL BEFORE GRADUATING, 1983-1984

PUBLICATION NO. 459

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RESEARCH & EVALUATION BRANCH

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS:
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO LEFT SCHOOL BEFORE GRADUATING, 1983-1984

Publication No. 459

Research and Evaluation Branch
Los Angeles Unified School District

February 1986

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HARRY HANDLER
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EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS:
High School Students Who Left School Before Graduating, 1983-1984

ABSTRACT

This is an annual study for the 1983-84 school year. It examines the number of students in grades 10, 11, and 12 who left school without a diploma.

The findings in this study includes all regular senior high schools, opportunity schools, continuation high schools, and magnet school programs. The summary includes comparison data based on sex, grade, age, ethnicity and reason for leaving.

The significant facts are listed:

- The 10,555 early leavers for 1983-1984 number slightly more than in previous years.
- More than 60% of the leavers left during the 2nd semester.
- There are more male early leavers than female.
- Continuation high schools had the largest percentage of early leavers.
- Magnet schools had the least of early leavers of all non-special-education programs.
- This year's proportion of early leavers (8.1% of enrollment in grades 10-12) represents the highest percentage since the district began studying students who leave before graduating.
- "Whereabouts Unknown" and "Overage" represent more than 60% of the early leavers.
- The number of early leavers at grade 10 is higher than at grades 11 and 12.

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Introduction

The relationship between years of schooling, employment, and quality of life is very significant in the American Society. Educators recognize the importance of staying in school and receiving a high school diploma. Yet, the early leaver remains a problem for California's schools and school boards.

State Superintendent of Schools Bill Honig has addressed the early leaver problem in California as one of its most serious educational shortcomings. Superintendent Honig's publication, "School Attendance Improvement: A Blueprint for Action," represents the State Department of Education's efforts to assist schools in bringing about a positive change in the holding power of our schools.

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has funded several innovative prevention/recovery programs to research indicators that will help local schools identify the potential early leaver.

The Research and Evaluation Branch and the Office of Assessment are seeking input from district staff in order to make the Dropout Prevention/Recovery Programs effective.

The nation's high schools have had a serious problem with a large number of students leaving school before graduation. During the past decade the number of early leavers has increased significantly. It is hoped that many students who leave during high school enter other training and learning programs and eventually complete their high school education and learn a salable skill.

The LAUSD has made a strong commitment to reduce the number of early leavers during the 1984-85 school year.

The following activities address the problem:

1. Research and Evaluation pilot study, summer 1984. Early leavers from 12 high schools were interviewed.

2. The State Department of Education's study on "Where did the Class of 1982 Go?"

3. Development of the Dropout Prevention-Recovery Program by LAUSD's pupil services and attendance office.

4. Research and Evaluation's publication of an Annual Early Leavers Study that compares the early leavers by grade, sex, ethnicity, and reasons.

5. The Superintendent's Task Force on Dropout Prevention headed by the Office of Reconfiguration and Assessment.

Purpose of the Study

This report will answer the following questions that may assist staff in reducing the early leaver numbers.

1. What differences are there in reasons for leaving school with respect to age, grade, sex, and ethnicity?

2. What is the relationship of early leaver rates from year to year?

3. Are the early leavers isolated in certain types of schools?

4. What percentage of the secondary school enrollment is classified as early leavers?

Procedures

The study of early leavers was approved by the Board of Education in 1979 and has been continued on an annual basis.

Early leavers are senior high students who left school before graduating because they were overage, began working full-time, were institutionalized, entered the military services, were pregnant, married, or were excluded for medical reasons, or whereabouts were unknown. District records code them as "L8s."

Each school month, schools send form 34-H-136 to Research and Evaluation Branch listing student transfers. The form contains 19 coded reasons why students leave school. Early leavers identified as L8's are used in this study. There are 132 schools with grades 10-12 providing leaver data (Table 1).

These schools are grouped into regular senior high (49), continuation (43), magnet (25), opportunity (8), and (7) special education schools (7). Results from these monthly reports are tabulated for comparison of early leavers by age, grade, sex, ethnicity, and reason.

Results

Incidence of Early Leavers, 1983-84

There were 130,356 students enrolled in grades 10-12 in October 1983. The number of early leavers for school year 1983-84 is 10,555 (8%), compared to 9,697 in 1982-83, (Table 1). There were 9,433 (7%) in 1981-82, and 9,866 (8%) in 1980-81. The historical perspective of early leavers in recent years is offered in Table 10, showing fractional variations from year to year.

Characteristics of Early Leavers

School Month and Type. Table 2 distributes leavers by school month and major type of school. Nearly 2/3 (64%) of all leavers departed during the 2nd semester, perhaps suggesting the crucial opportunities of 1st semester preventive remedies for teachers and staff.

Sex. Consistent with the number of early leavers for the past 5 years, males comprised the majority. The 1983-1984 figure is 60%. (Table 3)

Grade. The largest number of leavers appear for grade 10 (45.1%), with 28.9% from grade 11, and 25.5% from grade 12. (Tables 3 & 6)

Average Age. The early leaver in 1983-1984 was 17.7 years old. The oldest leavers were in special education schools and the youngest in magnet schools. (Table 4)

Ethnicity. Table 5 shows proportions of early leavers by racial-ethnic group. Leaver and enrollment proprotions for the past 2 years show similar pattern, with minor fluctuations.

Reasons for Leaving

The seven major reasons for leaving early are overage (39%), whereabouts unknown (38%), institutionalized, full-time employment, marriage, medical exclusion, and military services. (Table 9)

Reason by Average Age. The overage leaver (4,115) was typically 18.7 years old. The whereabouts-unknown leavers (4,043) averaged 16.9 years of age. (Tables 4 & 7)

Other Reasons. Under the classification of Other, there are 522 early leavers. The five major reasons noted were excessive absences, in custody of parents, deceased, medical, and child care. (Table 7)

Reason by Sex. Female leavers outnumber male L8s in one major category (marriage). (Tables 7 & 9)

Reason by Grade. Again, as in previous years, 10th grade students accounted for the largest percentage of leavers and 12th graders the smallest. Their two major reasons for leaving are overage and whereabouts unknown. (Table 8)

Summary of Findings

1. The 10,555 students who left high school before graduating comprised 8% of the fall 1983 high school enrollment.

2. Regular high schools accounted for 7% (7,193) of leavers, and continuation high schools lost 61% (2,080) of their enrollment.

3. The 9th and 10th months recorded the largest number of leavers--64%

4. There were 22% more male leavers than female.

5. There were significantly more 10th grade leavers (4,761) than 11th (3,054) or 12th (2,693).

6. The average age of the 1983-1984 early leaver was 17.7 years.

7. Enrollment and leaver proportions in 1983-84 varied slightly from those in 1982-83.

8. Whereabouts Unknown was the reason most commonly noted for leaving early (38%).

Recommendations

1. The district should train all teachers and counselors to identify potential early school leavers. Potential leavers should be identified as early as possible, perhaps in elementary school.

2. Students identified as potential leavers should be provided appropriate instruction, counseling or what ever services needed to keep them out of remedial tracks thus preventing them from becoming early school leavers.

3. The district should study the reasons why males are more likely than females to leave school early.

4. Early leaver prevention programs should stress helping students before they enter the 10th grade.

5. Efforts should be made shortly after students leave school to find them and bring them back into an educational program that will help them earn a diploma.

6. Continuation and opportunity high schools offer specialty programs for potential early leavers. In 1983-84, continuation high school enrollment decreased by 61%, due to early leavers; for opportunity high schools, the figure was 42% This pattern is consistent with earlier reports. Reasons and remedies for these losses need to be researched.

Appendix A

Tables 1-9

Table 1

Early Leavers and October Enrollment, by Type of School, 1982-83 and 1983-84

Type of Senior High	School N 1982-1983	School N 1983-1984	Grades 10-12 Enrollment N Oct. 1982[a]	Grades 10-12 Enrollment N Oct. 1983[b]	LB School Leavers 1982-1983 N	LB School Leavers 1982-1983 % of Enrollment	LB School Leavers 1983-1984 N	LB School Leavers 1983-1984 % of Enrollment
Regular	45	45	104,512	102,050	6,651	6	7,233	7
Continuation	43	43	4,102	3,387	1,937	47	2,080	61
Magnet	25	25	3,515	4,863	48	1	57	1
Opportunity	8	8	1,470	1,094	75	5	455	42
Special education	7	7	1,413	4,865	552	4	49	1
Year-round	4	4	13,862	14,097	0	0	681	5
Total	132	132	128,874	130,356	9,697	8	10,555	8

[a]Enrollment data based on Racial and Ethnic Survey, Fall 1982, Research and Evaluation Publication No. 420. [b]Enrollment data from Racial and Ethnic Survey, Fall 1983, Research and Evaluation Publication No. 439.

Table 2

Number of Leavers, by School Month and Type, 1983-84

School Month	Regular N	Regular % of Total (7,233)	Continuation N	Continuation % of Total (2,080)	Other N[a]	Other % of Total (1,242)	Grand Total N	Grand Total %[b]
1	211	3%	92	36%	36	3%	339	3%
2	543	8	141	7	109	9	793	8
3	566	8	165	8	107	9	838	8
4	388	5	102	5	99	8	589	6
5	830	11	272	13	144	12	1,246	12
6	820	11	311	15	186	15	1,317	13
7	975	13	237	11	141	11	1,353	13
8	610	8	191	9	98	8	899	9
9	1,077	15	291	14	103	8	1,526	15
10	1,213	17	278	13	164	13	1,655	16
Total 1983-84	7,233	68.5	2,080	19.7	1,242	11.8	10,555	100
Total 1982-83	6,651	68.6	1,937	20.0	1,109	11.5	9,697	100

[a]Other includes leavers in magnet, special education, and opportunity programs.
[b]Fractional inflations may exist due to rounding.

Table 3

Sex and Grade of Early Leavers, 1983-84

Item	Grade 10		Grade 11		Grade 12		Ungraded		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Leavers	2,867	1,894	1,873	1,181	1,605	1,088	27	20	6,372	4,183
% of Total Leaving Grade	60	40	61	39	60	40	57	43	60	40
% of Total Leaving All Grades (10,555)	27	18	18	11	15	10	0.3	0.2	60	40

Note. The ungraded column represents cases not reported by grade. Early leavers are not classified by administrative regions because all 132 schools with grades 10-12 are in the Senior High or Special Education Divisions rather than regions. Some percentages may reflect fractional inflation due to rounding.

Table 4

Average Age of Early Leavers, by Type of School and Sex, 1982-83 and 1983-84

Category	Average Age (yrs.) 1982-83	Average Age (yrs.) 1983-84	1983-84 LB Leavers with Birthdate Reported	Not Reported	Total
Type of School					
Regular	17.6	17.5	7,195	38	7,233
Continuation	17.8	18.4	2,071	9	2,080
Magnet	16.7	17.5	57		57
Opportunity	17.1	17.3	455		455
Special education	19.0	21.5	49		49
Year-round	17.7	17.7	681		681
Total	17.6	17.7	10,508	47	10,555

	Average Age by Grade			
Sex	10	11	12	Total
Male	17.2	17	18.7	17.9
Female	17.1	17.8	18.5	17.8
Total	17.2	17.8	18.6	17.9

Total by Grade 1983-1984	4,761	3,054	2,693	10,555
Total by Grade 1982-1983	4,060	2,872	2,708	9,697

Table 5

Number of Early Leavers, by Race/Ethnicity and Type of School, 1983-84 and 1982-83

School Type	Amer. Ind./ Alaskan Nat.		Asian/Pacific Islander		Black Not Hispanic		Hispanic		White Not Hispanic		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Regular	11	0.1	311	4	1,919	27	3,277	46	1,675	23	7,193
Continuation	7	0.3	52	3	685	33	660	32	650	32	2,061
Magnet	0	0	1	2	21	37	24	42	11	19	57
Opportunity	6	1	3	1	197	43	170	37	81	18	457
Special education	0	0	3	6	15	31	20	41	11	22	49
Year-round	0	0	37	5	92	15	396	57	156	23	681
Total 1983-1984 Enrollment	24	0	407	4	2,929	28	4,537	43	2,589	25	10,498
Oct. 1983	423	0.4	10,376	9	29,541	25	45,826	38	33,869	28	120,035
Total 1982-1983 Enrollment	34	0	400	4	2,283	25	4,128	45	2,481	27	9,326
Oct. 1982	368	0.3	10,468	9	29,151	25	42,006	36	34,630	30	116,623

Note. There were 57 students not identified by ethnicity for 1983-84, and 371 for 1982-1983.
[a]Enrollment source: racial-ethnic survey, grades 10-12.

Table 6

Number of Early Leavers, by Grade and Type of School, 1983-84

Type of School	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Unclassified[a]	Total N	Total %
Regular	3,336	2,221	1,638	38	7,233	68.5
Continuation	878	476	715	9	2,080	19.7
Magnet	10	14	33	0	57	0.5
Opportunity	210	136	109	0	455	4.3
Special education	1	3	45	0	49	0.5
Year-round	326	204	153	0	681	6.5
Total	4,761	3,054	2,693	47	10,555	100.0
% of Total	45.1	28.9	25.5	0.4	100.0	

Note. Early leavers are not classified by regions, because all 132 schools with grades 10-12 are in Senior High or Special Education Divisions. Year-round schools had greater holding power than traditional high schools.
[a]Unclassified represents 47 cases not reported by grade.

Table 7

Early Leavers by Average Age, Sex, and Reason, 1983-84

Reason for Leaving	N	Average Age	Male N	Female N
Family moving	10	16.9	6	4
Full-time employment	684	18.4	479	205
Institutionalized	738	17	638	100
Marriage	75	17.3	8	67
Medical exclusion	305	17.3	66	239
Military service	44	18	42	2
Opportunity transfer	6	17.9	1	5
Overage	4,115	18.7	2,555	1,560
Permit cancelled	1	17.8	0	1
Statement of residence	2	17.6	2	0
Whereabouts unknown	4,043	16.9	2,292	1,751
Curriculum	1	15.6	1	0
Medical	1	17.4	0	1
Other[a]	522	17.2	277	245
Total	10,547	17.3	6,372	4,183

Note. There are 8 missing cases, or .01% of early leavers did not have birthdates that were verified. [a]Other reasons for leaving that are unusual, such as deceased, Job Corps, etc.

Table 8

Reasons for Leaving Early, by Grade, 1983-1984

Reason for Leaving	Grade 10 N	10 %	11 N	11 %	12 N	12 %	Ungraded N	Ungraded %
Family moving	3	30	7	70	0	0	0	0.0
Full-time employment	331	48.4	177	25.9	175	25.6	1	0.0
Institutionalized	434	58.8	193	26.2	108	14.6	3	0.4
Marriage	41	54.7	19	25.3	14	18.7	1	1.3
Medical exclusion	166	59.4	96	31.5	41	13.4	2	0.7
Military service	9	20.5	16	36.4	19	43.2	0	0.0
Opportunity transfer	4	66.7	0	0	2	33.2	0	0.0
Overage	1,019	24.8	1,375	33.4	1,697	41.2	24	0.6
Permit cancelled	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Statement of residence	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Whereabouts unknown	2,482	61.4	1,019	25.2	52.9	13.1	13	0.3
Curriculum	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Medical	0	0	0	0	1	100	0	0
Other[a]	265	50.8	149	28.5	106	20.3	2	0.4
Total 1983-84	4,761	45.1	3,054	28.9	2,693	25.5	47	0.4

Note. There are 47 cases not identified by grade. [a]Other reasons for leaving include the unusual, such as deceased and Job Corbs.

Table 9

Reasons for Leaving Early, by Sex, 1983-84 and 1982-83

Reason for Leaving	LB School Leavers							
	Males		Female		Not Reported		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Overage	2,555	62	1,560	39	--	--	4,115	39
Whereabouts unknown	2,292	57	1,751	43	--	--	4,043	38
Full-time employment	479	70	205	30	--	--	684	7
Institu-tionalized	638	86	100	14	--	--	738	7
Medical exclusion	66	22	239	78	--	--	305	3
Enlisted military	42	96	2	4	--	--	44	0.4
Marriage	8	11	67	89	--	--	75	0.7
Other	277	50	235	43	39	30	551	5
Total 1983-84	6,372	60.4	4,183	39.6	--	--	10,555	
Total 1982-83	5,744	57	4,061	41	231	2	9,866	

Table 10

Historical Record of Early Leavers Since 1979-80

Year	School N[a]	October Enrollment[b]	School Leavers N	School Leavers % of Enrollment
1983-84	132	130,356	10,555	8.1%
1982-83	132	128,874	9,697	7.5
1981-82	132	131,528	9,433	7.2
1980-81	114	129,921	9,866	7.6
1979-80	110	131,638	8,940	6.8

[a]Count of schools teaching grades 10-12. [b]Enrollment based on Racial and Ethnic Survey conducted each fall.

Appendix B

Record of Transfer

P.O. 12S-62865-5

FORM 34-H-136 REV. 12/82
STOCK NO. 821271

L1 Within district—same school
L2 Within district—not same school (See Lx for Integration Reassignment)
L3 Public school within State
L4 Nonpublic school in California
L5 Other states in USA and out of USA
L7 9th and 12th Grade graduates and students withdrawing with Certificate of Proficiency
L8 Unknown and Drop (include medical exemptions when student will not be receiving any instruction)
Lx Participating school in paired/clustered/midpoint reassignment

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT School_____ Loc. Code_____ Region_____

RECORD OF TRANSFER Month ending_____ Page_____ Telephone No._____

	DATE LEFT	DAYS NOT ENROLLED	NAME	RECORD NO.	TRANSFERRED TO SCHOOL	CITY	STATE	BIRTH DATE Mo - Day - Year	*REASON	GRADE 7/10	GRADE 8/11	GRADE 9/12	HOMEROOM	AAR	PROGRAM	PTR	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L7	**L8	LX	
1																									1
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*Reason for Transfer

1. Family Moving
2. Full-time Employment
3. Institutionalized Pupil
4. Marriage
5. Medical Exclusion
6. Military Service
7. Non-Public School
8. Opportunity Transf.
9. Oppor. Transf. Cancelled
10. Over-age
11. Permit Cancelled
12. Statement of Residence
13. Whereabouts Unknown
14. Regular
15. Curriculum
16. Sibling
17. Medical
18. Failed Competency Test
19. PWT
20. Other_____ Identify

**Ethnicity of L8 students who are listed

Number of:

American Indian ☐ Asian ☐ Black ☐ Hispanic ☐ White ☐

Person to Contact Concerning This Report

Signature of Principal or Authorized Substitute

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